

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9489
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR 5796
AMEMMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GT
SUBJ: ELECTION SITREP #7

REF: GUATEMALA 1452

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. THERE HAS BEEN NO PROGRESS IN VOTE COUNTING AS OF THE MORNING OF MARCH 9. THE MARCH 8 TALLY (SITREP #5, GUATE 1426) HAS BEEN QUESTIONED BY SOME MEMBERS OF THE ELECTORAL COUNCIL AND STILL ANOTHER TABULATION WAS TO HAVE BEGUN TODAY. AN IMPATIENT PRESS FINALLY CORNERED ELECTORAL REGISTRAR MALDONADO DE LA CERDA AND ASKED HOW THE VOTE TABULATION WAS PROCEEDING. MALDONADO SAID THAT REGISTRY WORKERS HAD BEEN ON HAND SINCE 8 AM THIS MORNING, HOWEVER, COUNTING COULD NOT PROCEED SINCE REPRESENTATIVES FROM TWO PARTIES WERE NOT PRESENT. REGARDING THE GUATEMALA CITY RETURNS, MALDONADO SAID THESE HAD NOT BEEN RECEIVED BUT THAT THE ELECTORAL COUNCIL HAD APPROVED AN EXTENSION OF TIME TO THE MUNICIPAL ELECTORAL

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BOARD FOR THE CAPITAL, "AS MUCH TIME AS THEY NEED." THE MAYOR AND HEAD OF THE GUATEMALA CITY ELECTORAL BOARD (LEONEL PONCIANO) HAD SAID THE EVENING OF MARCH 8 THAT THE BOARD HAD COMPLETED THE COUNT AS FAR AS IT WAS ABLE AND ON MARCH 9 WOULD PACK UP THE DOCUMENTS AND SEND THEM TO THE ELECTORAL COUNCIL. THE MAYOR AT THAT TIME HAD ALSO SAID THE BOARD WOULD NOT RELEASE THE RESULTS BUT WOULD LEAVE THIS FOR THE COUNCIL.

2. IN AN INTERVIEW ON MARCH 8, MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT DONALDO ALVAREZ, WHEN ASKED TO COMMENT ON MLN TALK OF A COUP, REMARKED WRYLY THAT IT TAKES EXPERIENCE TO STAGE A COUP AND THAT NO GUATEMALAN IS MORE EXPERIENCED AT THIS THAN COL. PERALTA AZURDIA, PRESENT MLN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE (WHO HEADED THE COUP WHICH OUSTED PRESIDENT YDIGORAS.) ALVAREZ STATES THAT NO ONE IS THINKING OF A COUP EXCEPT PERALTA AZURDIA. REGARDING PARAMILITARY GROUPS, ALVAREZ SAID HE WAS UNAWARE OF ANY PARTY ORGANIZATION WHICH HAD SUCH UNITS; IF THERE WERE SUCH GROUPS, HE FELT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO KEEP THE PEACE AS IT HAS DONE SO FAR.

3. VICE PRESIDENT MARIO SANDOVAL (MLN LEADER) TOOK TURNS WITH AN MLN PARTY SPOKESMAN IN DENOUNCING ELECTION FRAUD TO THE PRESS. THE PRINCIPAL COMPLAINT WAS THAT TWO MLN MEMBERS OF THE ELECTORAL COUNCIL HAD BEEN BARRED FROM ENTRY TO THAT TRIBUNAL. SANDOVAL DESCRIBED THAT ACT AS "INCREDIBLE." (MLN HAS THREE MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL: MALDONADO DE LA CERDA, SUPPOSEDLY NEUTRAL; RUDY FUENTES SANDOVAL, WHO REPRESENTS THE MLN; AND HECHTOR ANDRADE, WHO REPRESENTS THE COUNCIL OF STATE.) THE OTHER CHARGE WAS VOTING SKULDUGGERY IN ALTA VERAPAZ (A LUCAS STRONGHOLD) WHERE REPORTEDLY THE ARMY INTERCEPTED ELECTION MATERIAL PRIOR TO THE MARCH 5 ELECTION. ACCORDING TO THE MLN THE COMMANDER OF THE MILITARY BASE IN ALTA VERAPAZ SAID HE HAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ORDERS FROM THE GOVERNMENT THAT THE MATERIAL SHOULD BE DELIVERED TO THE MAYORS INSTEAD OF TO THE ELECTORAL BOARD. MOREOVER, THE MLN CHARGED THAT DCG (CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT) AND MLN REPRESENTATIVES WERE KEPT AWAY FROM THE ELECTORAL MESAS BY THREATS FROM LUCAS' FOLLOWERS. THE MLN HAS DEMANDED THE VOIDING OF THE ALTA VERAPAZ RETURNS (ESTIMATED 4 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL VOTE).

4. PERALTA AZURDIA IN A SEPARATE INTERVIEW STATED THAT HE REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE TELEGRAPHIC REPORTS OF ELECTION TALLIES FROM THE VARIOUS ELECTORAL BOARDS. ONLY THE "ACTAS" (VOTING STATEMENTS) SIGNED BY THE OFFICIALS (INCLUDING PARTY REPRESENTATIVES) AT THE VOTING STATIONS WERE ACCEPTABLE. ON TALK OF A COUP, HE DENIED HE HAD DONE MORE THAN TO SAY THAT THERE WERE RUMORS OF A COUP. ASKED ABOUT INTIMIDATION OF MLN REPRESENTATIVES, HE SNAPPED, "THERE IS NO SUCH INTIMIDATION." END UNCLASSIFIED

5. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. COMMENT: THE MLN IS HAVING TROUBLE KEEPING ITS STORY STRAIGHT. WHILE SANDOVAL AND COMPANY ARE CHARGING INTIMIDATION, PERALTA AZURDIA IS DENYING IT. THE MLN HAS MADE A NUMBER

CHARGES ABOUT FRAUD FROM ALTA VERAPAZ, INCLUDING ONE OF KIDNAPPING OF OFFICIALS, ONLY TO HAVE THEM EXPLODE IN ITS FACE, FOR EXAMPLES WHEN REPORTERS FILMED THE ARRIVAL OF THE ELECTORAL DELEGATE FROM ALTA VERAPAZ IN GUATEMALA CITY. THE DELEGATE CLEARLY DENIED HE HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED IN ANY WAY AND THAT THE ARMY HAD IN FACT ASSISTED HIM IN DELIVERING THE ELECTION PAPERS TO THE CAPITAL AND THAT HE WAS EN ROUTE TO THE ELECTORAL COUNCIL TO DELIVER THEM IN PERSON.

6. UNTIL NOW THE ARMY HAS HAD A CLEAN RECORD WITH RESPECT TO THE ELECTION. IT HELPED DISTRIBUTE AND COLLECT ELECTION MATERIAL AND MAINTAIN PEACE AND ORDER DURING THE BALLOTING. THE MLN CHARGE IS THE FIRST SERIOUS CHARGE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MILITARY INTERFERENCE WITH THE ELECTION. IF PROVEN, SUCH A CHARGE WOULD HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE PURITY OF THE ELECTION, BUT SO FAR IT SOUNDS LIKE "SOUR GRAPES."
BOSTER

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NNN

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